DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 365 939 CS 011 530

TITLE Comprehensive Instructional Management System--Communication Arts: Whole Language Network 1992-93. OREA Report.

INSTITUTION New York City Board of Education, Brooklyn, NY. Office of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment.

PUB DATE Sep 93

NOTE 47p.; For the 1991-92 report, see ED 357 334.

PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS Academic Achievement; Elementary Education; *Faculty Development; *Inservice Teacher Education; Program Effectiveness; Reading Research; Student Attitudes; *Teacher Attitudes; Teacher Improvement; *Whole Language Approach

IDENTIFIERS Alternative Assessment; New York City Board of Education

ABSTRACT

A study investigated teachers' and staff developers' perceptions and assessment of the Whole Language Network (which assists teachers in using the whole language approach), the support provided to participants, changes in teaching and assessment practices, and the effects of such changes on student attitudes and achievement. A total of 164 teachers in 5 Community School Districts in the New York City school system participated in the Network during 1992-93. Results indicated that: (1) almost all teachers reported that the Network was valuable in helping them implement whole language teaching strategies; (2) a large majority of participants found the exploration of alternative assessment trends useful; (3) the few respondents who participated in the Shakespeare component considered the experience to be valuable for their students; (4) nearly all teachers found the monthly meetings and in-school assistance provided by staff developers valuable in helping them apply whole language concepts in their classrooms; (5) nearly all participants described positive changes in their teaching that they attributed to their participation in the Network; (6) a majority of teachers noted positive changes in students' attitudes toward learning; and (7) mean differences in scores of Network and non-Network students were too small to be considered educationally meaningful. Findings suggest that project staff should: continue to educate teachers about whole language techniques; endeavor to expand the Network; secure the interest and active participation of principals; explore ways of obtaining books and other materials; and explore ways to provide teachers more time to meet together. (Six tables of data are included.) (RS)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 365 939

OREA Report

COMPREHENSIVE INSTRUCTIONAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM-COMMUNICATION ARTS: WHOLE LANGUAGE NETWORK 1992-93

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
R. Tobias
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

CS011530

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

CS

COMPREHENSIVE INSTRUCTIONAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM-COMMUNICATION ARTS: WHOLE LANGUAGE NETWORK 1992-93

CS011530

NEW YORK CITY BOARD OF EDUCATION

Carol A. Gresser
President

Irene H. Impellizzeri
Vice President

Victor Gotbaum
Michael J. Petrides
Luis O. Reyes
Ninfa Segarra-Vélez
Dennis M. Walcott
Members

Andrea Schlesinger
Student Advisory Member

Ramon C. Cortines
Chancellor

9/13/93

It is the policy of the New York City Board of Education not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, age, handicapping condition, marital status, sexual orientation, or sex in its educational programs, activities, and employment policies, and to maintain an environment free of sexual harassment, as required by law. Inquiries regarding compliance with appropriate laws may be directed to Mercedes A. Nesfield, Director, Office of Equal Opportunity, 110 Livingston Street, Room 601, Brooklyn, New York 11201, Telephone: (718) 935-3320.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Whole Language Network (W.L.N.) was initiated during the 1989-90 school year in Community School District (C.S.D.) 11 with a small group of teachers who were participating in the New York City Board of Education's Comprehensive Instructional Management System-Communication Arts (CIMS-CA) project. During 1991-92, the W.L.N. expanded to include 90 teachers in grades kindergarten through six in three districts--C.S.D.s 3, 11, and 30. C.S.D.s 5 and 15 joined the Network during 1992-93. A total of 164 teachers participated, including a group of middle school teachers in C.S.D. 11 who became involved during the spring semester. The purpose of the Network was to assist teachers in using the whole language approach, which emphasizes the integration of language arts skills (speaking, reading, writing, and listening), as well as subject area instruction, through the use of unifying themes. The project also sought to empower teachers to assume a more active role in curriculum decision-making.

Project activities included monthly workshops, either during or after the school day, led by CIMS-CA staff develpers; professional development conferences in summer 1992 and May 1993; and a drama component. Staff developers assisted W.L.N. participants in selecting and obtaining materials (particularly children's literature), visited teachers' classrooms to demonstrate effective teaching strategies, and worked with teachers individually to develop and implement instructional themes. A major focus of the project this year was the exploration of alternative approaches to assessment.

The evaluation of the W.L.N. by the Office of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment (OREA) during 1992-93 investigated teachers' and staff developers' perceptions and assessment of the Network, the support provided to participants, changes in teaching and assessment practices, and the effects of such changes on student attitudes and achievement.

Almost all teachers reported that the W.L.N. was valuable in helping them to implement whole language teaching strategies--e.g., incorporating children's literature, making the reading/writing connection, encouraging process writing, using multicultural and interdisciplinary themes, and encouraging cooperative learning. A large majority of participants also found the exploration of alternative assessment trends useful; in some districts, teachers piloted techniques such as portfolios, checklists, and interviews with students.

While relatively few of the respondents participated in the Shakespeare component, those who did considered the experience valuable for their students, and the related activities--e.g., pre- and post-play workshops and artists' visits to classroom--useful resources for them as teachers.

Nearly all teachers found the monthly W.L.N. meetings and in-school assistance provided by the staff developers valuable in helping them to apply whole language concepts in their classrooms; many regarded the support from staff developers and colleagues key to their success in implementing whole language practices. Valuable, too, were the summer 1992 and spring 1993 conferences. However, while a majority of participants reported that principals provided released time for staff development activities and encouraged the purchase of appropriate materials, school administrators and supervisors were not actively involved in supporting Network activities for the most part.

Nearly all respondents described positive changes in their teaching that they attributed to their participation in the W.L.N. These included using literature to help children make connections to their personal experiences and other subjects, providing opportunities for individual choice and independent work, and promoting student understanding of the power of language through its usage in meaningful contexts. Participants also reported that they were more involved in curriculum decision-making and open to new ideas, were benefiting from close working relationships with their colleagues, and were more enthusiastic about teaching, overall.

A majority of W.L.N. teachers noted positive changes in students' attitudes towards learning--especially a heightened interest in reading and writing--and greater confidence in their abilities. Most teachers attributed improvements in student achievement to the W.L.N., although others were unsure about such a connection.

Teachers identified a variety of areas in which they believed additional support was needed, including increased funding for materails, additional time for staff development activities and networking with colleagues, opportunities to visit and observe other whole language classrooms, and more assistance from school prinicpals and supervisors. Staff developers echoed these needs, and also expressed the hope that the Network would expand to include more teachers and would cluster more teachers in the same schools to promote peer support.

Overall, the mean differences in the spring 1993 D.R.P. scores of W.L.N. and non-W.L.N. students in the sample districts were too small to be considered educationally meaningful, although in C.S.D.s 11 and 30 there was a tendency for the scores of W.L.N. students to be higher than those of non-W.L.N. students. In C.S.D. 3 this trend was reversed.

Based on these evaluation findings, OREA makes the following recommendations:

- CIMS-CA staff developers should continue to educate Network teachers about alternative assessment strategies, and assist them in implementing these techniques in whole language classrooms. These should include the use of language in meaningful contexts, demonstrations of competence with a variety of genres, and opportunities for students both to demonstrate and reflect on their own progress over time.

- Given the success the W.L.N. has experienced, CIMS-CA program staff should endeavor to expand the number of districts and teachers involved in it and, to the extent possible, concentrate a larger number of participating teachers, and teachers of contiguous grades, in the same schools. This would provide teachers with greater sources of support and students with greater instructional continuity.

- In view of the importance of principals' support in integrating whole language strategies into classroom practice, project staff should continue to explore ways of securing their interest and active participation.

- Project staff should continue to explore ways of obtaining books and other materials necessary to the whole language approach, including private donations; stragegies for sharing needed materials, such as district bookmobiles, might be considered as well.

- Together with school and district administrators, W.L.N. staff should explore ways to provide Network teachers with more time to meet together and to participate in staff development activities, both during and after the school day.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report was written by the Office of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment's High School Evaluation Unit (OREA/H.S.E.U.) of the New York City Board of Education under the direction of Dr. Lori Mei. Judith A. Eisler, Evaluation Associate, served as project manager for the coordination and writing of this evaluation report. Howard Budin, Evaluation Consultant, was responsible for site interviews and report writing.

Additional copies of this report are available by writing to:

Dr. Lori Mei
Office of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment
110 Livingston Street, Rm. 740
Brooklyn, New York 11201

TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
Executive Summary		i
Acknowledgments		iv
I.	Introduction	1
	Background	1
	Drama Component	5
	Program Evaluation	6
	Scope of This Report	8
II.	Program Implementation	9
	Curriculum and Classroom Activities	9
	Support and Training	14
	Impact of the W.L.N.	18
	Additional Support and Changes Needed	24
III.	Student Achievement	26
IV.	Conclusions and Recommendations	33

LIST OF TABLES

		Page
1	Percentage of Teachers Considering the Whole Language Network Useful for Various Purposes	11
2	Comparison of Spring 1993 D.R.P. Scores (N.C.E.s) of W.L.N. students and non-W.L.N. students in Selected W.L.N. Districts by Grade	28
3	Comparison of Spring 1993 D.R.P. Scores (N.C.E.s) of W.L.N. and non-W.L.N. Students in Selected W.L.N. Districts by District	29
4	Comparison of Spring 1993 D.R.P. Scores (N.C.E.s) of W.L.N. and non-W.L.N. Students in C.S.D. 3 by Grade	30
5	Comparison of Spring 1993 D.R.P. Scores (N.C.E.s) of W.L.N. and non-W.L.N. Students in C.S.D. 11 by Grade	31
6	Comparison of Spring 1993 D.R.P. Scores (N.C.E.s) of W.L.N. and non-W.L.N. Students in C.S.D. 39 by Grade	32

I. INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

The goals of the New York City Board of Education's Comprehensive Instructional Management System-Communication Arts (CIMS-CA) program, introduced in 1980, are to develop a holistic communication arts curriculum and staff development program for kindergarten through grade eight. The program emphasizes the integration of reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills using a thematic approach that cuts across subject areas. Previous evaluations of this project by the Office of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment (OREA) have explored many issues, including teachers' use and assessment of the CIMS-CA curriculum, the staff development provided, and the impact of the program on students' reading and writing achievement.

Overall, the findings have indicated that teachers consider the curriculum to be interesting and motivating for students, and particularly useful for integrating language skills. They have judged the staff development--especially grade and faculty conferences, and demonstration lessons--to be helpful. Teachers who participated in the drama component, initiated in 1985-86, have consistently judged it to be a valuable learning experience for their students. CIMS-CA has also generally been associated with growth in students' reading and writing achievement.

Criticism has focused on the level of difficulty for less able readers and English as a Second Language (E.S.L.) students, the project's failure to update the curricular themes, and the

lack of adequate support from school administrators and supervisors.

During the 1989-90 school year, the project piloted the Whole Language Network (W.L.N.) in C.S.D. 11 with a small group of CIMS-CA teachers. The W.L.N. expanded during 1991-92 to include two additional districts, C.S.D.s 3 and 30, and during 1992-93 to include two more, C.S.D.s 5 and 15. In the 1991-92 school year a total of 90 teachers in grades K-6 participated in this project; in 1992-93 the number rose to 164,* and included a group of middle school teachers who joined the project in February 1993.

The purpose of the Network was to assist teachers in understanding and using the whole language approach, an instructional strategy that is consistent with the holistic philosophy of the CIMS-CA curriculum. Accordingly, it encouraged teachers to use children's literature as a springboard for various curriculum activities, such as writing, reading aloud, and sharing ideas with classmates, and emphasized the importance of authentic learning contexts--i.e., instructional and assessment activities that engage students in meaningful tasks, rather than teach and evaluate isolated skills out of context. Another objective of the W.L.N. was to empower teachers to play a

---

*During the first two years of the project's operation, teachers identified as particularly "effective" by CIMS-CA staff developers or by district and school staff were invited to participate on a voluntary basis. In subsequent years, the project expanded to include teachers, typically less experienced, who principals believed would benefit from participation.

more active role in curriculum decision-making, including development of curricular themes and selection of materials.

The current OREA evaluation focused on this project component, in part because it is the most recent CIMS-CA initiative, and in part because its overall approach reflects national trends in instruction and assessment.

Project Activities

Monthly workshops. CIMS-CA staff developers in the five participating districts led monthly workshops for W.L.N. participants, although teachers typically set the agenda. In some districts these workshops were held after school hours; in others, teachers were given release time to attend during the school day. Sessions addressed issues such as incorporating children's literature into lessons, developing themes that integrate language skills and content areas, and making the reading/writing connection. A main focus of staff development activities during 1992-93 was exploring alternative assessment strategies, which included developing and piloting assessment materials. Follow-up assistance to teachers from CIMS-CA staff developers included demonstration lessons, individual and grade conferences, and classroom observations.

In C.S.D. 11, where the project has been operating for four years, there were separate workshops for teachers based on the number of years they had participated in the Network, which focused on their interests and levels of experience with the whole language approach. The original group of W.L.N. teachers

in C.S.D. 11, now in their fourth year, met only twice during the year instead of monthly, partly because of limited Network resources and also because staff developers felt this group was experienced enough to continue without as much support.

Other professional development activities. During 1992-93, there were two professional development conferences for W.L.N. participants to further strengthen their understanding and application of--or, in the case of school administrators, their support for--the whole language approach.

A four-day conference in summer 1992 focused on integrating whole language with math and science, and CIMS-CA staff developers from three of the districts worked collaboratively with CIMS-Science and CIMS-Math staff developers to plan the conference. (C.S.D.s 5 and 15 were not yet involved with the Network.) Teachers worked in grade-level groups to develop themes based on integrating math and science with a whole language approach. The conference also addressed alternative means of assessing progress in science and math.

Another conference, in May 1993, focused on alternative assessment. Keynote speaker Roger Farr from Indiana addressed purposes and strategies of assessment, concentrating on the collection of materials for students' portfolios. Network teachers from all five districts attended the conference, as did some school supervisors and superintendents. Teachers developed and led a majority of the workshops. While stressing assessment issues, the conference also covered other whole language issues,

such as building and organizing libraries of children's literature and developing interdisciplinary themes.

DRAMA COMPONENT

The drama component has been in operation since the 1985-86 school year. As in previous years, the goals of this component were to introduce students to the world of William Shakespeare, increase their understanding and appreciation of the theater, provide them with an opportunity to attend a professionally produced play, and encourage creative expression. Teachers of grades 4-8 in CIMS-CA schools could involve their students in this drama experience.

The project consisted of three major parts: preparation for attending an off-Broadway performance of the play (this year, Henry V for elementary grades and Love's Labour Lost for junior high school), a trip to a live performance, and students' performance of a selected scene. The fundamental approach entailed using drama to engage students actively in the learning process. Interactive, personal experience is thus viewed as a vehicle for extending their understanding of literature and developing communication skills.

Teaching artists from the Theatre for a New Audience, whose services were contracted for through the central Board of Education, visited participating schools to conduct pre- and post-performance workshops directed at helping teachers to prepare their students, first for seeing the live production, and then for their own performances. This included model lesson

plans utilizing role play, improvisation, language games, and other teaching activities designed to help children become familiar with the content and historical background of the play, stimulate their imagination, and foster an appreciation for the power of language. Using abridged versions of the plays, teachers explored key themes, plot, characters, and Shakespeare's use of language with their students. Listening, speaking, writing, and appreciation of the play were emphasized. (Students were not expected to read the play.) Visiting artists also met with students to spark their interest in the play and to assist them in staging their selected scenes--e.g., developing their characters, interpreting their lines, and using appropriate movements and gestures.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

The evaluation of the W.L.N. project by the Office of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment (OREA) focused on teachers' and staff developers' perceptions and assessment of the Network, the support provided to participants, changes in teaching and assessment practices, and the effect of such changes on students' attitudes and achievement.

Sample Selection

For the qualitative portion of this evaluation, OREA included all teachers in C.S.D.s 3, 5, 11, 15, and 30 who were participating in the W.L.N. during the 1992-93 school year, as well as the CIMS-CA staff developers in each of these districts.

For the quantitative portion of the evaluation, the spring 1993 reading scores of students in C.S.D.s 3, 11, and 30 whose teachers participated in the W.L.N. during 1992-93 were compared with the test scores of students in the same grade levels whose teachers did not participate in the Network in order to assess the program's impact on students' reading achievement. (C.S.D.s 5 and 15 were not included because they were new to the project this year, and measureable changes in student reading achievement could not realistically be expected.)

Data Sources

The evaluation was based on the following data sources:

- interviews with the central CIMS-CA project director and the coordinator of the W.L.N. project;
- an interview with the CIMS-CA staff developer in each of the three districts participating in the project;
- questionnaires mailed to all W.L.N. teacher participants covering such topics as the usefulness of the W.L.N. workshops, changes in teaching practices, approaches to assessment, and additional assistance needed;
- review of relevant project documents;
- site visits to several W.L.N. and drama workshops to learn more about the issues being explored and the concerns of project participants; and
- a comparison of the spring 1993 Degrees of Reading Power (D.R.P.) test scores of W.L.N. and non-W.L.N. students in C.S.D.s 3, 11, and 30.

SCOPE OF THIS REPORT

This report of OREA's evaluation of the W.L.N. consists of four chapters. Chapter I provides an overall description of the project, focus of the evaluation, and evaluation methodology. Program implementation, including staff development activities,

participants' perceptions of various project components, and the impact of the W.L.N. on teaching practices and student attitudes and reading achievement are discussed in Chapter II. Chapter III presents findings on students' achievement in reading. Conclusions and recommendations are included in Chapter IV.

II. PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

DESCRIPTION OF RESPONDENTS

A total of 77 teachers in the Whole Language Network (W.L.N.) returned the OREA questionnaire. This represented a response rate of 47 percent, considered good for a mailed survey. Slightly over one-third of the respondents were teachers of kindergarten through second grade, half taught third through sixth grade, and the rest taught more than one grade. Half of the respondents had been using CIMS-CA for two years or less, and only one-third for more than three years. This was the first year of participation in the W.L.N. for about 40 percent of the teachers, while less than one-fourth had been involved with it for more than two years.

CURRICULUM AND CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Responding teachers reported that they used children's literature for several important purposes in their classrooms. Most important, according to one-third of the respondents, was to help cultivate oral and written communication skills. One teacher explained that it was crucial to "develop in students the need to communicate: to find their voices as speakers, thinkers, authors, readers, and listeners." Literature also fosters a love for reading and an appreciation of the beauty of language. Other related purposes cited by teachers included: learning specific skills involved in reading, writing, listening, and thinking critically; listening to and understanding others' points of

view; and expressing feelings clearly. Several teachers discussed the importance of connecting literature and language to other areas of life, by relating personal experiences to what students read and showing them that reading and writing are skills needed throughout life. Several teachers also asserted that language arts form the basis for all other curriculum areas. Teachers also discussed the use of children's literature specifically as the basis for all language and communication work in their classrooms. Many (N=26) reported that they used literature as the foundation for themes that integrated different curriculum areas, particularly social studies, but also science, math, art, and music.

Responding teachers indicated that the Network had been valuable in helping them implement instructional strategies integral to the whole language approach. As Table 1 indicates, nearly all respondents (98 percent) found it moderately or very useful for incorporating children's literature and making the reading/writing connection. At least 90 percent of W.L.N. participants found the Network useful for encouraging process writing, using multicultural themes, developing interdisciplinary themes, encouraging cooperative learning, and integrating content-area materials. A large majority found it useful in exploring trends in alternative assessment. A greater percentage of respondents found the Network useful in each of these categories than respondents in the 1991-92 school year had, ranging from increases of four percent for incorporating

Table 1

Percentage of Teachers Considering the Whole Language Network Useful for Various Purposes

Purpose	Rating		
	Very Useful	Moderately Useful	Combined
Incorporating children's literature	90	8	98
Making the reading/ writing connection	75	23	98
Encouraging process writing	67	29	96
Using multicultural themes	66	26	92
Developing interdisciplinary themes	54	38	92
Encouraging cooperative learning	55	36	91
Integrating content-area materials	65	25	90
Exploring alternative assessment trends	44	44	88

- Large majorities of teachers (ranging from 88 to 98 percent) considered the Whole Language Network useful for the purposes intended.

children's literature, making the reading/writing connection, and integrating content-area materials, to an increase of 13 percent for teaching process writing.

Teachers identified a number of strategies they used in teaching language arts. All respondents said they read aloud to children and conducted whole group discussions. Nearly all (96 percent) had children read aloud to them and modeled the steps in the writing process for children. Only 57 percent, on the other hand, used reading skills worksheets with their classes. A majority of respondents also named other strategies they used, including journal writing, making books, doing art projects relating to language work, and using poetry and songs.

Asked what kinds of interactive activities their students engaged in, over 90 percent of teachers named shared reading or writing in whole class or small groups, and sharing their own work with others in the class. Over 80 percent said their class had literature discussion groups, two-thirds used peer tutoring, and three-fifths said their students edited each other's work. In addition, teachers said their students interacted in creating original plays, art projects, and making their own books.

Teachers also identified several ways in which their students assumed responsibility for their own work. Nearly all said that students chose books and other materials for their reading, and selected topics they wanted to write about. Three-fourths said their students made decisions about their independent work or group projects, and slightly less than half

reported that their students assessed or reflected on their own progress.

As discussed in Chapter I, one focus of staff development activities during the 1992-93 school year was alternative assessment. Staff developers from all five school districts reported that they devoted time at monthly Network meetings to exploring different types of alternative assessment and, in some cases, developing checklists or forms for assessing student progress in language arts. In some districts, teachers piloted assessment techniques with students and discussed them at Network meetings, while in others the staff developers introduced the concept of alternative assessment with the intention of having teachers begin to implement them during the 1993-94 school year. In one district, teachers created their own assessment form, practiced using it, and planned to pass it on to their students' teachers next year. In another district, teachers practiced interviewing students about their reading. In two other districts, according to staff developers, teachers worked on developing student portfolios.

Teachers said they used a variety of techniques to assess student achievement in language arts. Nearly all (96 percent) used observations of student performance. For nearly four-fifths, conferences with individual students and student contributions to group projects were factors in assessment. Nearly two-thirds reported using student portfolios. Fewer respondents used teacher-made tests (44 percent) and standardized

tests (33 percent). A few teachers mentioned other sources for assessment, such as student journals, response logs, artwork connected to language projects, oral reading, and skills sheets.

Eleven responding W.L.N. teachers participated in the Shakespeare component of CIMS-CA. All of them found the related activities useful, including the pre-play workshops to prepare for viewing the play, the post-play workshops and the artists' classroom visits to help children prepare for their own performance. All of the teachers said that the experience was valuable for their students. Benefits to children included an increased understanding and appreciation of Shakespeare, and the opportunity to work together to produce a scene and perform it. One teacher exclaimed, "My students were thrilled by the experience. It had a tremendous impact on their self-perception and how others saw them." Another said it was "the best thing I have ever done with kids and they have become lovers of Shakespeare and theater." Teachers also described the experience as valuable because they were able to connect it to other areas of the curriculum such as art, music, history, reading, writing and use of language in general.

SUPPORT AND TRAINING

CIMS-CA staff developers in the five districts provided support to teachers in the W.L.N., in the form of monthly workshops, in-school assistance, and conferences in summer 1992 and May 1993.

Staff developers described a variety of responsibilities they assumed for the monthly workshops, which included planning the meetings, ordering materials, working with school administrators to make sure teachers were released from teaching duties (if the meetings were held during school time), selecting materials for distribution, and preparing themselves by reading professional articles. They described their role at the meetings primarily as facilitators, empowering teachers to share ideas and children's work, communicate their classroom experiences, lead discussions, or read aloud to the group. According to staff developers, these meetings gave teachers an opportunity to network with their peers, learn about whole language materials and approaches, and plan for the future. Most respondents (87 percent) found the meetings valuable in helping them apply the whole language approach in their classrooms.

Staff developers' responsibilities for the summer 1992 and spring 1993 conferences included planning the agenda in collaboration with CIMS-Science and CIMS-Math staff, recruiting participants, encouraging Network teachers to lead workshops and assisting them in preparing presentations, arranging schedules and rooms assignments, facilitating at workshops, and preparing bibliographies and other materials for participants.

Almost half of the responding teachers attended the summer 1992 conference, and approximately the same number attended the May 1993 conference. A large majority of attendees (81 and 78

percent, respectively) judged these staff development activities to be valuable.

Staff developers in each district reported spending much of their time working in schools with Network teachers. They conferred with teachers about setting up libraries, delivered materials, worked with paraprofessionals, and visited classrooms to observe, conduct model lessons, and read aloud to students. Outside of the classroom, they met with teachers to plan activities during preparation periods, sometimes conducted grade conferences attended by other school staff as well as Network teachers, and acted as liaisons to school administrators in planning for the Network.

Nearly all responding teachers (92 percent) rated the assistance provided by CIMS-CA staff developers as helpful (referring to all of their assistance, in school and at meetings), while most of the rest (6 percent) said this help was not needed. Sample comments by teachers give a sense of the importance of the staff developers to the Network:

- She is a treasure. She is always available to offer assistance or encouragement in any way she can.
- He was always available for demonstration lessons or individual conferencing.
- Her dedication to her group of network teachers was remarkable, giving us a wealth of materials, preparing pertinent agendas.

About half of the respondents indicated that their own school provided a staff developer, and the majority of these teachers (63 percent) regarded this assistance as helpful. Also,

most responding teachers (80 percent) believed that their colleagues were a valuable source of assistance. Teachers considered monthly W.L.N. meetings and the two conferences as the most valuable training activities in helping them to apply the whole language approach in their classroom. Other activities considered worthwhile, although by fewer teachers, were individual conferences (43 percent), classroom observations (42 percent), and grade conferences (20 percent). Other training activities mentioned as worthwhile included observing other teachers, courses or workshops taken on their own (mostly with the Writing Project at Teachers College), and visits to their classroom by authors.

When asked how their principals supported the implementation of the whole language approach during the year, a majority of teachers reported that school administrators had provided release time for staff development activities (62 percent) and encouraged the purchase of appropriate materials (56 percent). Fewer respondents said that principals had provided planning time to collaborate with peers (43 percent), or provided such direct instructional assistance as observations and individual or group conferences (30 percent). Some W.L.N. teachers asserted that their principals strongly believed in the whole language approach, and generally supported their use of whole language ideas and methods, such as process writing. According to 17 percent of the respondents, however, principals provided little or no support. Less than half of the responding teachers (47

percent) rated the assistance provided by school supervisors, overall, as helpful; about one-fourth said that such help was not provided.

IMPACT OF THE W.L.N.

Changes in Teaching

Nearly all respondents described positive changes in their teaching practices that they attributed to participation in the W.L.N. Some sample comments reflect the uplifting effects of the Network:

- I have grown so much as a teacher by being involved with the W.L.N.!
- It has enriched and enhanced my ideas in the classroom. I'm reborn!
- I am not the same teacher I was.
- I have thoroughly enjoyed it and it has renewed my spirit.

In describing the ways in which their teaching had been enhanced, some teachers commented on their increased familiarity with the whole language approach and how to implement it. These teachers reported that their understanding of the whole language approach, their awareness of appropriate materials, and their knowledge about children's literature, for example, had increased during the year.

Other teachers referred to specific changes in their teaching practices--most notably, less reliance on basal readers and workbooks, and increased use of literature for students' reading. Some cited greater use of group work and projects, increased emphasis on vocabulary, the integration of subject

areas, and time spent both reading aloud to students and listening to them read. One teacher commented that the Network had "provided me with activities that encourage reading and writing in a natural, developmental way." Another described her teaching now as "much more geared to small group and individualized instruction. The classroom, in general, is more child-centered than before."

Another change that was important to many teachers concerned their relationship with colleagues. To many teachers, a main benefit they derived from the Network was the opportunity to talk to, and learn from, their peers. The time provided for staff development meetings furnished both information and support. Teachers' comments describe the impact of this change:

- The sharing of ideas at the meetings has helped me change practices in my classroom.
- I think that teachers need to talk to one another to find out what is going on.
- I have learned many strategies from my fellow teachers.
- The Network gives you the opportunity to share with your peers. I have experimented with methods and ideas used by others.

Teachers also reflected on changes in their own attitudes toward teaching. They described themselves as more open to new ideas, more flexible in their approach to teaching, more willing to take risks, more creative, more reflective, and more experimental in their choice and use of instructional materials. Teachers attributed these changes to the support and attitude of CIMS-CA staff developers and the opportunities for discussion and

reflection at staff development meetings. The net result of these changes, according to many teachers, was an increased enthusiasm for teaching.

Staff developers' perceptions corroborated teachers' views of positive changes in their teaching. Staff developers noticed increased and improved use of literature, more interdisciplinary curriculum, and a greater degree of comfort and confidence in the whole language approach.

A majority of respondents (57 percent) also reported that participation in the W.L.N. had a positive influence on their involvement in curriculum planning. These teachers explained that they had become more knowledgeable about curriculum, materials, and literature through Network activities, and consequently now chose what their students read instead of relying on basal readers. Many teachers also created curriculum projects or themes during the year, such as a theme on families and one on different cultures. Several teachers reported that they had developed projects collaboratively with other teachers, either at Network meetings or, in some cases, in school. Not all teachers were involved in making curriculum decisions, however. A few indicated that school principals were opposed to teacher involvement in curriculum decision making.

A large majority (78 percent) of teachers indicated that their participation in the W.L.N. led to greater professional satisfaction. The reasons they cited echoed their perceptions of changes in their teaching practices and involvement with

curriculum decisions. Learning about teaching through the Network was gratifying in itself. Teachers said they had enjoyed learning about whole language as well as other curriculum areas, and becoming more knowledgeable about children's learning and development. One teacher said the Network had precipitated "great discoveries about children's talents and thoughts."

Another source of teachers' satisfaction was their students' heightened enthusiasm for reading:

- Seeing the children enjoy books has made me happier in my profession.
- I enjoy seeing my class excited over who takes home a book tonight!
- The children enjoy reading and listening to stories. That's made me feel good.
- I feel more fulfilled when the enthusiasm of the children is felt.
- I find that the children become so enthusiastic, and I, in turn, get enthusiastic, and on and on! .

Many teachers were pleased about their own professional growth, and viewed themselves as better at teaching language, using literature effectively, developing themes, implementing the writing process, and using whole language teaching in general.

Teachers also derived satisfaction from networking with colleagues. As one teacher put it, "My professional satisfaction has been enhanced by the opportunity to meet with like-minded colleagues who put their whole language philosophy into practice. I would like to see this type of networking given time and professional support grade-wide in every school."

Altogether, teachers expressed a sense of contentment and excitement in being part of the W.L.N. A few comments are illustrative of this sentiment:

- I don't know what I would have done as a new teacher without CIMS-CA and my district staff developer.
- I have grown a lot.
- I'm feeling more changed up and inspired. For the first time in 15 years I feel that the treatment we received from the district staff developer and others in the W.L.N. is more professional than I've yet experienced.
- It makes me want to come to work! I enjoy teaching this way!

Perceived Changes in Student Attitudes and Learning

Most respondents (83 percent) perceived positive changes in students' attitudes toward learning and school. This change manifested itself, according to teachers, largely in the area of reading. These teachers believed that their students loved books, had a desire to read more and to read different types of books, and had a greater appreciation of literature, because of the whole language approach. They now enjoyed reading for pleasure and looked forward to new books. This attitude was also associated with an increased interest in writing their own books. Teachers also observed differences in students' general attitudes toward learning. Many teachers said that their students now had more confidence in their abilities, took more responsibility for their own learning, were more involved in their work, and enjoyed working cooperatively with their peers. One teacher attributed these changed attitudes to "a non-threatening, risk-free environment" in which learning had become fun and exciting.

Other teachers associated changes more generally with the environment of their whole language classrooms. A few comments capture the flavor of this environment:

- My students consider every day a new adventure! They beg for writing center and enjoy all aspects of the language program. Most of my kindergarten students are emergent readers.
- Students enjoy reading trade books more than the basal reader. The skills are taught in a way that the children are more active participants in their learning.
- My students love to read and write. They can't get enough books to read, and they are constantly writing!

Most teachers (68 percent) related their participation in the W.L.N. to improvements in student achievement, although the rest were unsure or did not comment. Many teachers named specific areas of improvement, such as reading and writing skills, thinking skills, vocabulary, and language arts skills in general. Many of those who did not attribute these gains directly to the whole language approach, nevertheless alluded to such a connection:

- My students have made nice progress in reading because many have developed a real love for books.
- The materials used build in their own success! Literature-based programs work! My students are excited about taking command of their reading and writing! Come and visit anytime!
- The amount of material and information the children retained increased dramatically. They were able to carry their knowledge into all other areas.
- My third graders are reading above grade level and are writing, writing, writing!

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT AND CHANGES NEEDED

Many teachers identified areas in which they felt additional support was needed. Foremost among these was the need for funding for additional materials such as writing supplies and trade books. They also asked for more time to meet and plan with colleagues, attend conferences, collect materials, and work on themes. Several teachers expressed the desire to visit classrooms of other teachers using the whole language approach. Some teachers wished that the principals and supervisors in their schools were more supportive of the whole language approach and their efforts to implement it. A few teachers requested more information and workshops on specific topics with which they needed help, such as cooperative learning and working with small groups. Finally, in C.S.D. 11, where teachers in their fourth year with the Network did not meet monthly in 1992-93 as in previous years, some respondents expressed the need to continue these regular meetings.

Staff developers also identified some of the same needs teachers did. From their perspective, the most pressing need was for greater support from school administrators: to understand the whole language approach; to support whole language teachers; to be involved in training sessions; and to ensure released time for training activities. Staff developers reiterated teachers' desire for additional meeting time and for more funding for materials. They also expressed the hope that the Network could be expanded to include more teachers, and that districts would

agree to cluster more Network teachers in fewer schools. They believed that in this way teachers would be able to offer one another greater support and would feel less isolated.

III. STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

In order to assess the impact of the W.L.N. on students' reading achievement, OREA compared the spring 1993 mean scores on the Degrees of Reading Power (D.R.P.) test of students in grades 2-6 in the sample districts (C.S.D.s 3, 11, and 30) whose teachers participated in the Network during the 1992-93 school year with the mean scores of all other students (non-W.L.N.) in these districts.

Scores are reported in the form of Normal Curve Equivalents (N.C.E.s), norm-referenced scores which indicate how students performed in relation to a national norming sample--i.e., students in the same grade in a nationally representative sample who took the test. Since N.C.E.s are based on an equal interval scale, they can be used for arithmetic and statistical calculations, and to compare scores across grade levels.

Uncorrelated *t*-tests were conducted to determine the statistical significance between the scores of W.L.N. and non-W.L.N. students, and an effect sizwe (E.S.) calculated to determine whether any differences obtained were educationally meaningful.*

---

*The effect size is the ratio of the mean gain to the standard deviation of the gain. This ratio provides an index of the improvement in standard deviation units irrespective of the size of the sample. An E.S. of 0.2 is considered to be a small E.S., 0.5 a moderate E.S., and 0.8 a large E.S. Only effect sizes of 0.8 and above are considered to be educationally meaningful, reflecting the importance of the change to the students' educational development.

As can be seen in Tables 2-6, the mean differences in the spring 1993 D.R.P. scores of W.L.N. and non-W.L.N. students in the sample districts were too small to be considered educationally meaningful, although in C.S.D.s 11 and 30 there was a tendency for the scores of W.L.N. students to be higher than those of non-W.L.N. students. In C.S.D. 3 this trend was reversed.

However, caution should be exercised in interpreting these findings. While standardized reading tests (such as the D.R.P.) provide useful information about student achievement and allow for comparisons based on uniform testing conditions and objective scoring standards, they are limited. They provide evidence of student performance at a given moment in time (typically under stressful conditions) and, since they are multiple choice in nature, require a single "right" answer that does not reveal students' reasoning processes. Consequently, standardized test data should be supplemented with other sources of evidence of reading competency, including those that sample student performance over an extended period of time, require explanations, interpretations, and reactions to written text, make use of a variety of reading contexts, and present tasks that are meaningful for students.

Table 2

Comparison of Spring 1993 D.R.P. Scores (N.C.E.s) of W.L.N. Students and Non-W.L.N. Students in Selected W.L.N. Districts by Grade

Grade	W.L.N. N	W.L.N. Mean	W.L.N. S.D.	Non-W.L.N. N	Non-W.L.N. Mean	Non-W.L.N. S.D.	Difference Mean	Difference E.S.
2	555	48.0	23.3	5,734	45.4	22.6	2.6	0.1
3	370	51.1	24.6	6,328	43.7	23.4	7.4	0.3
4	407	52.7	26.2	6,302	48.1	24.4	4.6	0.2
5	505	52.3	21.3	6,203	49.5	22.8	2.8	0.1
6	88	21.4	60.0	4,667	46.4	23.1	13.6	0.6
Total	1,925	51.3	23.7	29,234	46.7	23.4	4.6	0.2

- Overall, the mean scores of W.L.N. students on the spring 1993 D.R.P. were higher than the mean scores of non-W.L.N. students for all grade levels in the sample districts. However, the differences were too small to be considered educationally meaningful.

Table 3

Comparison of Spring 1993 D.R.P. Scores (N.C.E.s) of W.L.N. and Non-W.L.N. Students in Selected W.L.N. Districts by District

	W.L.N.			Non-W.L.N.			Difference	
C.S.D.	N	Mean	S.D.	N	Mean	S.D.	Mean	E.S.
3	358	37.7	22.5	5,529	44.7	25.3	-7.0	0.3
11	712	49.8	23.3	12,293	44.8	22.7	5.0	0.2
30	855	58.2	21.9	11,412	49.6	22.9	8.6	0.4
Total	1,925	51.3	23.7	29,234	46.7	23.4	4.6	0.2

- In all sample districts, the mean differences between the scores of W.L.N students and non-W.L.N. students on the spring 1993 D.R.P. were too small to be considered educationally meaningful. However, in C.S.D.s 11 and 30, there was a tendency for the mean scores of W.L.N students to be higher than those of non-W.L.N. students, whereas in C.S.D. 3 this pattern was reversed.

Table 4

Comparison of Spring 1993 D.R.P. Scores (N.C.E.s) of W.L.N. and Non-W.L.N. Students in C.S.D. 3 by Grade*

Grade	W.L.N. N	W.L.N. Mean	W.L.N. S.D.	Non-W.L.N. N	Non-W.L.N. Mean	Non-W.L.N. S.D.	Difference Mean	Difference E.S.
2	124	37.7	22.8	1,353	44.0	25.0	-6.3	0.2
3	108	40.2	21.3	1,454	43.1	24.9	-3.1	0.1
4	46	31.1	24.5	1,339	45.5	26.5	-14.4	0.5
5	80	38.0	22.3	1,383	46.2	24.5	-8.2	0.3
Total	358	37.7	22.5	5,529	44.7	25.3	-7.0	0.3

* These analyses do not include the scores of grade 6 students because in C.S.D. 3 teachers of this grade level did not participate in the W.L.N.

- Overall, the spring 1993 D.R.P. mean scores of W.L.N. students were lower than the mean scores of non-W.L.N. students in C.S.D. 3, although these differences were too small to be considered educationally meaningful.

Table 5

Comparison of Spring 1993 D.R.P. Scores (N.C.E.s) of W.L.N. and Non-W.L.N. Students in C.S.D. 11 by Grade

Grade	W.L.N. N	W.L.N. Mean	W.L.N. S.D.	Non-W.L.N. N	Non-W.L.N. Mean	Non-W.L.N. S.D.	Difference Mean	Difference E.S.
2	276	47.8	23.5	2,350	41.7	21.9	6.1	0.3
3	35	52.3	21.5	2,387	41.7	22.5	10.6	0.5
4	178	44.4	26.0	2,589	46.5	23.6	-2.1	0.1
5	209	56.9	19.6	2,548	49.5	21.8	7.4	0.3
6	14	48.5	12.7	2,419	44.3	22.6	4.2	0.2
Total	712	49.8	23.3	12,293	44.8	22.7	5.0	0.2

- Overall, the spring 1993 D.R.P. mean scores of W.L.N. students tended to be higher than the mean scores of non-W.L.N. students in C.S.D. 11, although these differences were too small to be considered educationally meaningful.

Table 6

Comparison of Spring 1993 D.R.P. Scores (N.C.E.s) of W.L.N. and Non-W.L.N. Students in C.S.D. 30 by Grade

	W.L.N.			Non-W.L.N.			Difference	
Grade	N	Mean	S.D.	N	Mean	S.D.	Mean	E.S.
2	155	56.7	19.6	2,031	50.7	20.6	6.0	0.3
3	227	56.1	24.9	2,487	46.1	23.2	10.0	0.4
4	183	66.2	19.0	2,374	51.4	23.6	14.8	0.6
5	216	53.1	20.3	2,272	51.5	22.7	1.6	0.1
6	74	62.2	22.0	2,248	48.7	23.4	13.5	0.6
Total	855	58.2	21.9	11,412	49.6	22.9	8.6	0.4

- Overall, the spring 1993 mean D.R.P. scores of W.L.N. students were higher than those of non-W.L.N students in C.S.D. 30, although these differences were too small to be considered educationally meaningful.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this evaluation indicate teachers who participated in the Whole Language Network were overwhelmingly satisfied with the support they received from staff developers, with the training activities in which they took part, and with their own professional growth in understanding and implementing the whole language approach in their classrooms. Compared with the OREA evaluation of the W.L.N. in the 1991-92 school year, teachers were even more positive about their experience.

Teachers were most enthusiastic about the support given to them by CIMS-CA staff developers who, as in previous years, offered various kinds of assistance. Teachers greatly appreciated the monthly meetings in which they had the opportunity to communicate with their peers in the Network. They also praised staff developers for the in-school support they offered, including modeling lessons, helping them plan, and providing materials. Finally, teachers who participated in the summer 1992 and May 1993 conferences found these to be very helpful. The eleven teachers who participated in the Shakespeare component all lauded the experience for contributing to their students' language development and appreciation of theater. They also thought the opportunity to prepare and present a scene from the play was a valuable experience for their students. These teachers are rated the training, including the pre- and post-play workshops and the artists' visits, very highly.

A main focus of the May 1993 conference was exploring alternative means of assessment, and staff developers reported addressing this throughout the year as well. Nearly 90 percent of respondents indicated that the Network had been valuable in helping them learn about various alternative assessment strategies. Staff developers in all five districts reported discussing this issue in monthly meetings, and in some districts teachers created and piloted forms or checklists for assessing students' language skills. Exploring alternative assessment techniques was more systematic than in the previous year in that training activities focused on it and staff developers worked with teachers to help them experiment with different techniques. Some staff developers indicated that this year's efforts were directed at helping teachers to understand the conept of alternative assessment, and that next year's focus would be on implementation.

In addition to the assistance they received from staff developers, teachers reported receiving a great deal of support from their colleagues, both in school (where more than one Network teacher was in the same school) and at Network staff development activities. They benefited from hearing from colleagues talk about their classroom experiences, planning themes and other curriculum activities collaboratively, and discussing common concerns.

Compared with the previous year, a slightly higher percentage of teachers, although still a minority, was satisfied

with the assistance and support provided them by school supervisors. At the same time, many teachers and staff developers wished that school administrators understood, supported, and were involved with the whole language approach to a greater extent.

Nearly all teachers believed that they were better teachers and were more satisfied professionally because of their involvement with the W.L.N. Their level of knowledge about whole language had increased, as had their ability to implement whole language practices. As a result of these changes, their attitude toward teaching had improved. They saw themselves as more confident of their abilities and more enthusiastic about teaching. Most teachers also reported that they were more involved in making curriculum decisions than before, although some said that their supervisors/principals? would not allow them to be involved in this.

A large majority of respondents believed that as a consequence of the positive changes in their own teaching, children's attitudes and achievement had improved. They saw their students as better and more enthusiastic readers and writers, more confident about and involved in their own learning, and more collaborative workers.

In spite of their successes and overall satisfaction with the W.L.N., teachers and staff developers identified several areas in which they needed additional support: greater support from school administrators; a higher level of financial support

for materials; and additional time for planning, networking, and visiting other whole language classrooms.

Overall, the mean differences in the spring 1993 D.R.P. scores of W.L.N. and non-W.L.N. students in the sample districts were too small to be considered educationally meaningful, although in C.S.D.s 11 and 30 there was a tendency for the scores of W.L.N. students to be higher than those of non-W.L.N. students. In C.S.D. 3 this trend was reversed.

Based on the evaluation findings, OREA makes the following recommendations:

- CIMS-CA staff developers should continue to educate Network teachers about alternative assessment strategies, and assist them in implementing these techniques in whole language classrooms. These should include the use the language in meaningful contexts, demonstrations of competence with a variety of genres, and opportunities for students both to demonstrate and reflect on their own progress over time.
- Given the success the W.L.N. has experienced, CIMS-CA program staff should endeavor to expand the number of districts and teachers involved in it and, to the extent possible, concentrate a larger number of participating teachers, and teachers of contiguous grades, in the same schools. This would provide teachers with greater sources of support and students with greater instructional continuity.
- In view of the importance of principals' support in integrating whole language strategies into classroom practice, project staff should continue to explore ways of securing their interest and active participation.
- Project staff should continue to explore ways of obtaining books and other materials necessary to the whole language approach, including private donations; strategies for sharing needed materials, such as district bookmobiles, might be considered as well.

- Together with school and district administrators, W.L.N. staff should explore ways to provide Network teachers with more time to meet together and to participate in staff development activities, both during and after the school day.